

SUB A17

1. An apparatus for extracting information desired by a user from a source, the apparatus comprising:

an input module for acquiring text from a user;

a filtering module configured to receive the text from the input module and compare the text to a corpus to acquire a micro-context relevant to the text, the filtering module configured to locate the information by matching the micro-context to a database; and

a presentation module configured to receive the information and present the information to a user.

SUB B27 2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the micro-context is independent of a hierarchical ordering of the database.

SUB A27 3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the filtering module comprises a context construction module configured to receive text from the input module and combine words in the text to form the micro-context, the micro-context further being characteristic of the information.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the filtering module further comprises a context comparison module configured to receive the micro-context from the context construction module and acquire a macro-context relevant to the database by comparing the micro-context to the corpus.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the filtering module further comprises an information matching module configured to receive the macro-context from the context comparison module and determine a location of the macro-context in the database, the database being contextually indexed for searching by context.

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- 1           6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the presentation module is configured to  
2 selectively present the information in a format designated by a user.  
3  
4           7. The apparatus of claim 5, further comprising a mining module configured to  
5 independently add new data to the database by selectively retrieving the new data from the  
6 source.  
7  
8 ~~SUB B47~~ 8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the mining module retrieves data from the  
9 source over a network.  
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11 ~~SUB A37~~ 9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the source is substantially remote from the  
12 mining module.  
13  
14 ~~SUB B67~~ 10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the network is the Internet.  
15  
16           11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the information includes data about products  
17 purchasable by a user over the Internet.  
18  
19 ~~SUB A47~~ 12. The apparatus of claim 5, further comprising an updating module configured to  
20 independently update the information periodically after presentation to a user.  
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22           13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the database further comprises a subset  
23 configured to store the information for future access by a user.  
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16. The apparatus of claim 15, further comprising a mining module configured to independently add new data to the database by selectively retrieving new data from the source.

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1 17. A method for extracting information desired by a user from a source, the method  
2 comprising the steps of:

3 receiving text from a user, wherein the text is descriptive of the information sought;  
4 comparing the text to a corpus to acquire a macro-context for the information;  
5 locating the information that matches the macro-context in a database; and  
6 presenting the information to a user.

7  
8 18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step of combining relevant  
9 words in the text to form a micro-context characteristic of the information before the step of  
10 comparing the text to a corpus.

11  
12 19. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of locating information that matches  
13 the macro-context in a database comprises searching through indices in the database similar  
14 in format to the macro-contexts, and returning the information linked to indices which  
15 correlate to the macro-contexts.

16  
17 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the step of presenting the information to a user  
18 comprises presenting the information in a format designated by a user.

19  
20 21. The method of claim 20, further comprising the step of selectively retrieving data  
21 from the source over a network to add to the database.

22  
23 22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of independently updating  
24 the information periodically after the step of presenting the information to a user.

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